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ABSTRACT

This paper asserts that memorization is an under-valued language acquisition strategy, noting that by including memorization in communication classrooms through oral question-and-answer prompts, songs, and memorized dialogues/skits, second language teachers can enhance student learning. The paper explains how oral questions offer a cooperative learning exercise where pairs of students can focus on a set of generic questions and stock answers. It goes on to note that because songs have a focused lyrical and grammatical content and some repetition of structures or phrases, they can be used effectively to teach the target language. Finally, the paper discusses how medium length dialogs, rehearsed and memorized as skits, not only teach three of the four basic language skills (reading, speaking, and listening), but also offer a kinesthetic and social component. The paper presents sample questions and answers, sample music-related exercises, and sample dialogues for classroom use. (SM)

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ED 470 449

DON'T THROW OUT THE BABY WITH THE BATHWATER: The Indispensable Role of Memorization in Language Acquisition

Memorization is an *under*-valued "language acquisition strategy" these days. Included in a communicative classroom through memorized skits, oral question-and-answer prompts, and songs—students learn better.

California Language Teachers Association
Sunday, April 29, 2001 8:00-9:00am

presented by Tom Blodget, M.A.
Butte College, Shasta College

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ORAL QUESTIONS

The oral questions are a genuine cooperative learning exercise where in pairs one student has a set of 8-10 generic questions ("Where do you live?", etc.) and the other has a complete set of stock answers ("I live in California"-- can later be modified/personalized), but out of order in relation to the list of questions. The first student asks the questions in order, and the second locates the answers (they almost always share the same verb in the answer) and responds orally, then both students write down what s/he is missing (either the question or the answer). This activity usually fully engages the students for half an hour (we'll stop after five minutes for this workshop), and requires *reading, speaking, listening, and writing* in equal amounts. Once completed, students practice the questions. They are also to study them at home, because these questions become the oral test for the chapter. I call them up one at a time during the written test and I ask three questions at random, which they answer for points. This is an example of the *specificity* that students crave; they know that "all they have to do" is memorize the stock answers, which is not so daunting. By the end of the year (college semester), they have memorized 120 such questions and answers, with not only the manipulated grammar structures but all of the corresponding vocabulary. It would be wrong to criticize this because it is "scripted"; I assert quite emphatically that in a first year class, most of the learning is by nature scripted or memorized, which is the pre-requisite to the wonderful, spontaneous, "communicative" responses they will be able to come up with after having first memorized the basics. You can't give a spontaneous response if you don't know any vocabulary or verb conjugations!

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Preguntas Orales--Capítulos 8/9

You have the questions and your partner has the answers, out of sequence. You will ask the first question on your list, and your partner will locate the answer on theirs and reply. Both of you then write down what the other says, WITHOUT LOOKING AT THEIR PAPER (when you are finished, then you may check for spelling). If you finish early, continue to practice the questions with your partner.

1. ¿Te mandó una carta tu hermana?

_____

2. ¿Le dijiste a tu amigo Menganito que no había posibilidad de conseguir las entradas?

_____

3. ¿Le diste algunos regalos a tu sobrina para su cumpleaños?

_____

4. ¿Les explicó bien el profesor por qué aprendemos de memoria las respuestas a estas preguntas?

_____

5. ¿Nos trajo el café el camarero o el dueño del restaurante?

_____

6. ¿Le prestó usted el libro a su compañero de clase?

_____

7. ¿Le prometiste a tu novia(o) nunca jamás salir con otra(o)?

_____

8. ¿Quién nos regaló los platos?

_____

9. ¿Les gustó la película? (¡ojo!)

_____

10. ¿Te compraste una lavadora?

_____

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Preguntas Orales--Capítulos 8/9

You have the answers to the questions being asked. Your partner will ask the first question on his or her list, and you will locate the answer on yours and reply. Both of you then write down what the other says, WITHOUT LOOKING AT THEIR PAPER (when you are finished, then you may check for spelling). If you finish early, continue to practice the questions with your partner.

1._____
1. Concha nos los regaló.
2._____
2. Sí, nos lo explicó.
3._____
3. No, no se lo presté.
4._____
4. Sí, me la compré.
5._____
5. Sí, se lo dije.
6._____
6. Sí, se lo prometí.
7._____
7. El camarero nos lo trajo.
8._____
8. Sí, me la mandó.
9. _____
9. Sí, nos gustó.
10._____
10. Sí, se los di.

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MUSIC

Music is another tool for memorization. If the song is appealing, has a focused lyrical and grammatical content, and some repetition of structure or phrases, it can be used effectively to teach the target language. I have written a score of songs to meet this need and these criteria. Out there--in the authentic music world--are surely some appropriate songs that can be identified and treated to a lesson. Your task as language teachers would be to find them and write lessons to them.

It is my opinion—not backed up by studies because to my knowledge none have been done—that memorization is easiest when the language to be learned is wedded to melody. Proof of this is that almost anyone can recite (or sing!) the entire lyrics of at least one song, and probably 50 songs, if they're at all sensitive to music, either as a player, singer, or even just a passive listener. What percentage of the population could recite much of anything else, be it a speech, a story, a biblical or other religious passage, a poetic verse, or perhaps an aphorism? I think it likely that 95% of all memorized, lengthy language passages are lyrics of songs. And there is a good reason for that, other than the fact that people tend to hear songs over and over again these days (sometimes whether they like it or not!): ***when language is wedded to melody, it is easier to remember*** than if it were simply read, said, or heard aloud.

We'll play a song I wrote, in Spanish, and there is only time to discuss broadly, step-by-step, the pedagogy. What I've been doing to my own songs can be likewise applied to any "found" song, out there in the vast popular catalog of songs, in your target language.

1. Listen to the song. Students write down all the words they recognize, as fast as they hear them. The purpose of this is simple exposure and preparation for the song.
2. Listen to the song again with the lyrics in a cloze format; students fill in the missing words (providing a word bank is optional). Two listens are recommended.
3. Listen to the song again and have students circle or otherwise mark/code vocabulary or grammar structures in the song that you are currently teaching (vocabulary families, verb tenses, person-conjugation forms, etc.).
4. Ask yes/no, either/or questions about what happened in the song's lyrics.
5. Give students a sheet with the translation of the song into English on one side, and the blanks for the corresponding Spanish to be written on the other. The translated English is in order of appearance, and is not word-by-word only, but in meaningful phrases as well.
6. For homework or in class, have students do the exercises you've designed which tap all of the language learning possibilities that the song presents.
7. As a culminating activity, students can a) illustrate the lyrics of the songs on panels, b) memorize the entire song and sing along with it in front of the class, c) dramatically interpret the song for the class as it plays, or d) do a music video of the song.

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¿Es ella guapa?
¿Es ella _____?
¿Es ella intelectual o deportista
educada, pacifista
divertida, anarquista?
¿_____ es?

¿Es ella alta?
¿Es ella _____?
¿Es ella gorda o es
ella super flaca
de Toledo o Oaxaca
blanca, negra, o mulata?
¿_____ es?

Ya yo quiero saber
cómo es la _____, dime
¿Es feliz o triste
una tonta o muy _____
rica, pobre o artista?
¿_____ es?

¿Es alemana?
¿Es filipina?
¿Es rusa, suiza,
española, _____
holandesa, africana
peruana, camboyana?
¿De _____ es?

Ya yo quiero saber
en qué trabaja _____, dime
¿Es ella camarera
_____ o bombera
profesora, enfermera?
¿Qué hace ella?

¿Es carpintera?
¿Es conductora
Ingeniera,
policía o _____
abogada o taxista
una juez u oficinista?
¿Qué hace ella?

¿Es arrogante
o es humilde?
¿Es ella rubia o
_____ o castaña
generosa o tacaña
una vieja o _____?
¿Cómo es?

Ya yo quiero saber
cómo es la chica, dime
lo que sepas
A mí me caes bien, mi _____
A ver si nos queremos, vamos para allá.

<u>El Banco de Palabras:</u>
amiga baja cómo (3) chica estudiante ella fea lista
dentista morena muchacha mexicana dónde

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Write the Spanish next to the English (in order of appearance).

¿Cómo Es?

_____	Is she
_____	good-looking
_____	ugly
_____	intellectual
_____	athletic
_____	well-mannered
_____	pacifist
_____	fun
_____	anarchist
_____	What's she like?
_____	tall
_____	short
_____	fat
_____	thin
_____	(Spanish&Mexican town)
_____	(Mexican province)
_____	white
_____	black
_____	mulatta (mixed b&w)
_____	now
_____	I want to know
_____	tell me
_____	happy
_____	sad
_____	stupid
_____	smart
_____	rich
_____	poor
_____	artist
_____	German
_____	Phillipine
_____	Russian
_____	Swiss
_____	Spanish
_____	Mexican
_____	Dutch
_____	African
_____	Peruvian
_____	Cambodian
_____	Where's she from?
_____	What does she work at?
_____	waitress
_____	student
_____	firewoman ("fireman")
_____	teacher
_____	nurse
_____	What does she do?
_____	carpenter
_____	bus driver/conductor
_____	engineer
_____	policewoman
_____	dentist
_____	lawyer
_____	taxi driver
_____	judge
_____	office worker
_____	What does she do?
_____	arrogant
_____	humble
_____	blond
_____	dark-haired
_____	chestnut-haired
_____	generous
_____	stingy
_____	old
_____	young girl
_____	tell me what you know
_____	you seem a good person
_____	my friend
_____	let's see
_____	if we're in love
_____	let's go thataway

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Antónimos. *Give the opposites, which can be found in the song:*

1. guapa _____
2. maleducada*(*rude) _____
3. aburrida*(*boring) _____
4. baja _____
5. gorda _____
6. feliz _____
7. lista _____
8. rica _____
9. arrogante _____
10. generosa _____
11. joven _____

Las Nacionalidades y los Orígenes Étnicos. *Write the young woman's nationality in Spanish next to the English at the left.*

1. philipine_____
2. dutch_____
3. peruvian_____
4. russian_____
5. german_____
6. cambodian_____
7. african_____
8. mexican_____
9. swiss_____
10. spanish_____

alemana
filipina
rusa
suiza
española
mexicana
holandesa
africana
peruana
camboyana

El Encuestador. *Write* **the question** *to the following answers:* (See text of song for clues...)

1. ¿_____?
--Ella es de Guatemala.

2. ¿_____?
--Yo soy inteligente, bajo, simpático, y mi novia dice que soy guapo, también.

3. ¿_____?
--Él trabaja en el hospital. Es enfermero.

4. ¿_____?
--¿Yo? Yo soy profesor de español. Enseño español a los estudiantes.

Querer+infinitive. Complete the sentences.

la televisión *la leche* *el burrito* el español *la música*

1. Quiero beber_____.
2. Quiero escuchar _____.
3. No quiero mirar _____.
4. Quiero comer _____.
5. Quiero aprender _____.

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Las Profesiones

Femenino/Masculino

Grupo I

la camarera/el camarero--waitress/waiter
la bombera/el bombero -- fireman/woman
la enfermera/el enfermero -- nurse
la carpintera/el carpintero -- carpenter
la ingeniera/el ingeniero -- engineer
la abogada/el abogado -- lawyer

Grupo II

la profesora/el profesor -- teacher or professor
la conductora/el conductor -- bus driver

Grupo III

la dentista/el dentista -- dentist
la taxista/el taxista -- taxi driver

Grupo IV

la policía/el policía -- policeman/woman
la juez/el juez -- judge
la estudiante/el estudiante -- student

Not all of the professions above end in "-a" for feminine and "-o" for masculine, as in Group I. What do you notice about the endings in groups II, III, and IV? Describe the rule for feminine and masculine endings in each of the groups. (For example, the rule for Group I is, *"if it ends in "-o", it's masculine; if it ends in "-a", it's feminine."*)

Grupo II

_____

Grupo III

_____

Grupo IV

_____

Keeping these rules in mind, write the masculine endings for the following female professionals:

Femenino/Masculino

1. la guitarrista/el_____
2. la redactora/el_____
3. la asistente social/el_____
4. la portera/el_____

Write five professions you would like to pursue, and five you are less interested in:-

Me gustaría ser...	No me gustaría ser...
1 Me gustaría ser _____.	1 No me gustaría ser _____.
2 _____	2 _____
3 _____	3 _____
4 _____	4 _____
5 _____	5 _____

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Camarera estudiante bombera profesora enfermera carpintera conductora ingeniera policia dentista abogada taxista juez oficinista

1 _____ Yo conduzco (manejo) un coche comercial para mis clientes. Ellos me pagan dinero, y los llevo a varios lugares en la ciudad, por ejemplo al cine, a un restaurante, al teatro, o casa.
2 _____ Yo lavo y arreglo los dientes.
3 _____ Yo traigo la comida y las bebidas a los clientes en el restaurante.
4 _____ Yo vigilo y protejo a la gente contra los criminales.
5 _____ Yo trabajo en la oficina.
6 _____ Yo diseño cosas eléctricas, químicas, u obras públicas como carreteras, calles, y edificios, o *software* para las computadoras.
7 _____ Yo trabajo en el hospital.
8 _____ Yo estudio en la universidad.
9 _____ Yo conduzco (manejo) el autobús.
10 _____ Yo trabajo con madera para hacer muebles como sillas, mesas, armarios, casas, etcetera.
11 _____ Yo apago los incendios con agua
12 _____ Yo enseño a los estudiantes.
13 _____ Yo represento a mis clientes cuando tienen problemas legales, ante el juez, en el Tribunal, en el sistema judicial.
14 _____ Yo trabajo también en el Tribunal. Yo decido si alguien es culpable o no, y a veces yo decido si alguien va a la cárcel (la prisión).

"O" and "Y" ☞ "U" and "E". If "o" ("or") comes right before a word that starts with an "o" or "ho-", it must be changed to a "u", not only when writing but when *speaking!* For example, "uno *u* otro" means "one or another." The same is true for "y" ("and"), which changes to an "e" before a word that starts with either "y","i", "hy-" or "hi-" (which as you know are pronounced the same!). For example, "Ella es guapa *e* inteligente" means "She is good-looking and intelligent."

Write either "y" or "e" in the blanks.
1. Marcos es simpático ____ intelectual.
2. Pepita es bonita ____ enérgica.
3. La Señora Fernández es delgada ___ alta.
4. La Señorita Flores es atlética ___ inteligente.
5. Jorge es profesor, escritor, ___ hispano-hablante (spanish-speaking).

Write either "o" or "u" in the blanks.
1. Carlos quiere este libro ___ otro libro si es interesante.
2. --¿Te gusta este vestido ___ ése?
3. --¿"Carmen"? Creo que (I think) es una pelicula ___ obra de teatro (stage play).
4. --Es la séptima ___ octava vez (seventh or eighth time) què ese chico me llama por teléfono
5. --¿Quieres tomar té ___ café?

¿Cómo es él? *Rewrite the entire song, but make the subject of the song* él, *instead of* ella *This means that every adjective needs to be masculine: Start:* ¿Es él guapo? ¿Es él feo? etc *Underline all the words you had to change.*

Free gift: *use* ***"alemán"*** *and* ***"holandés"*** *for "alemana" and "holandesa" (see your text).*

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DIALOGS

Medium-length dialogs, rehearsed and memorized as skits, not only teach three of the four basic language skills--reading, speaking, and listening--but by nature they have a kinesthetic and a social component. How often you do it, and how much of the class time you allot to it is of course up to you. In high school I recommend one for each chapter. In college I recommend you do it at least once and see how it goes for you. I'm aware that time taken for this may interfere with "covering the number of chapters in a semester." It's all a question of giving it minimal priority in your class, and optimizing your pedagogy. Would 30 minutes a week in a four-hour week be worth devoting to this? If you feel that it is on par with a few of the weaker exercises in the text that you currently do, you might designate those exercises for home study or homework to make room for this, keeping in mind that practicing the dialogs (especially if you provide interesting dialogs!) has the bonus of being a social, small-group experience that is enjoyable for nearly everyone, and provides an alternate mode of learning in the pedagogical mix. I do one dialog per chapter with my college Conversation classes and they love it, as do the elementary kids in my after school program. It is especially effective in classes of 1 ½ hours or longer (all my college classes are 2-3 hours long, so both the dialogs and the oral questions are a welcome change (small group), as is the music.

What is the value of memorizing dialogs? Don't people in the "real world" generate sentences spontaneously? Who talks using a script? Of course, no one uses a script wholesale, but bits and pieces—they can, and they do. I remember dozens of sentences and fragments of dialogs that we were not required to memorize, in 7th and 8th grade beginning Spanish. Some of you may remember the actual text(s) from which I recall them:
"¿Cómo se llama esa señorita?"
"Dicen que son novios."
"Ni a mi tampoco."
"Hola Paco, ¿qué tal? ¿Cómo estás?"
"Bien, ¿y tú?"
"Bien, gracias."
"Tengo catarro."
"Ojalá que se mejore pronto."

It's not everyday that one gets a chance to tell people "I hope you get better soon," as in the last phrase above, yet by memorizing that phrase I could later generate new sentences such as "Ojalá que le vaya bien en España," or "Ojalá que te decidas pronto" or "Ojalá que vengan a la fiesta." Since the use of the subjunctive was way above first year level in that dialog, I wasn't able to generate alternate sentences right away, but when I encountered it later, I was off and running. However I could immediately, with new vocabulary, begin asking "What's that man's name?" etc, or "They say that..." or "I have...". **The "burning" into permanent memory of grammatical structures provides a lattice upon which new sentences can easily be made.** Without any structure in permanent memory, available for use, no sentences can be generated, except

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at the literal translation level which is often incorrect, and slowly done at best. A native speaker would have to be quite sympathetic to hang out with you if you had nothing to hang your words on.

What follows is a dialog (one of a related series) that we use in my Conversation 100 class:

La Fiesta Pequeña.

Lucía and Graciela meet Homero and Carlos in the grocery store.

Lucía: ¡Homero! Hola, ¿qué tal? ¿Cómo estás, amigo?
Homer! Hi, what such? How are you, friend?

Homero: Muy bien, Lucía, ¿y tú? ¿Qué hay de nuevo?
Very well, Lucía, and you? What is there of new?

Lucía: Mi prima está aquí, de visita. Homero, te presento Graciela.
My cousin is here, of visit. Homer, to you I present Graciela.

Graciela: Encantada, Homero.
Charmed, Homer.

Homero: El gusto es mío. *(They kiss each other on both cheeks)*
The pleasure is mine.
(To Lucía) **¡Tu prima es muy bonita!**
Your cousin is very pretty!

Graciela: Gracias. Usted es muy amable.
Thanks. You are very kind.

Homero: Les presento mi amigo Carlos.
To you (plural) I present my friend Carlos.

Carlos: Encantado, Graciela...Lucía.
Charmed, Graciela...Lucía.

Graciela: Igualmente.
Equally (charmed).

Lucía: Mucho gusto.
Much pleasure.

Carlos: ¿De dónde eres, Graciela?
From where are you, Graciela?

Graciela: Yo soy de Tejas, de Austin.
I am from Texas, from Austin.

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Carlos: ¿Estás de vacaciones?
Are you of vacations?

Graciela: Sí. Lucía es mi prima favorita.
Yes. Lucía is my cousin favorite.

Lucía: Y mañana es su cumpleaños.
And tomorrow is her birthday.

Carlos: ¡Qué casualidad! *Pasado* mañana es *mi* cumpleaños, el veinticuatro de marzo.
What coincidence! Past tomorrow is my birthday, the twenty four of March.

Homero: ¿Cuántos años tienes, Graciela?
How many years do you have, Graciela?

Graciela: ¡Qué barbaridad! ¡Es un secreto! OK, yo tengo veintisiete años.
What barbarity! It's a secret! OK, I have twenty seven years.

Carlos: ¡Mentira!
Lie! (Although this sounds blunt and rude, it's not taken that way here).

Graciela: Hay una pequeña fiesta hoy por la tarde en la casa de Lucía.
There is a small party today in the aft. in the house of Lucía.

Lucía: ¡Vengan ustedes!
Come you guys!

Carlos: ¿A qué hora?
At what hour?

Lucía: A las ocho, más o menos.
At the eight, more or less.

Homero: De acuerdo. ¡Nos vemos!
Of accord. Us we see!

Graciela: Hasta luego.
Until soon (after).

Carlos: ¡Adiós!
ToGod!

Lucía: ¡Hasta luego!
Until soon after!

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